

Kirk - Masquerade - (7/10)

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- Tracklist:**
1. Devil's Claw
 2. Supersonic Speed
 3. Masquerade
 4. Eternity
 5. Fight Of Die
 6. Nothing Else But Lies
 7. Time
 8. Tragedy
 9. Face In The Crowd
 10. The End Of The Universe
 11. Fallen Angel
- Genre:** Progressive Power
Label: Mausoleum Records
Playing Time: 53:53
Country: Switzerland
Year: 2014
Website: [Visit page](#)

Sophomore effort Masquerade from Swiss power metallers Kirk is an exciting, burning affair with a focus on involving songwriting; favouring grand, powerful refrains, over brute force, or wild guitar pyrotechnics. A very mature release and one which should appeal to fans of mature power metal à la Brainstorm, or even the melodic strand of progressive power metal, with comparisons to acts like Circus Maximus or Balance Of Power easy enough to draw.

The music throughout is largely controlled and driven via Thomas Rauch's dramatic vocals, which in terms of delivery aren't too far away from Geoff Tate, although in terms of actually tonality sounds somewhere between Brainstorm's Andy B. Franck or even Circus Maximus' Michael Eriksen in his lower register. As a result anything truly daring concerning the music does take somewhat of a backseat, opting for the more supportive role as seen in acts like Kamelot; fortunately there are enough rhythmic shifts and cutting melodies to keep this interesting for those who follow the music and rhythm more than they do the vocals.

There are some solid riffs as well, largely kept to introducing songs or splitting them up, as seen in the title track which opens up with a cracking riff, or backing up the keyboard lead in "The End Of The Universe". Speaking of which, there's a nice keyboard presence throughout, which isn't too overbearing, but awards a tinkling sheen to the ace choruses throughout, as well as functioning well as a lead instrument in various tracks. The lead guitars are on a similar level, with a sense of melody which isn't too far away from Iron Maiden or Helloween.

Like I say, Kirk are hardly the most brazen of acts doing the rounds, and if I had to pick one band that they really remind me of, it would be Balance Of Power. Particularly when Lance King was fronting them, as there's that slight tinge of AOR adorning the melodic progressive/power metal delivered throughout. Very understated, yet undoubtedly hooky, and really a complete pleasure to spend time with, "Eternity" particularly evokes that Balance Of Power style, and I'd say along with the burning opening cut "Devil's Claw", displays everything good about Kirk.

Whether the appeal will stretch wide is a question I'll no doubt ponder beyond these words. I think if you're inclined towards the more melodic strands of heavy metal, you know, to the point of acts like Queensrÿche, Dokken or Fifth Angel, or more recently At Vance (sans the neo-classical pompadour), then Kirk should no doubt appeal to you. They aren't particularly heavy, or technical; but these guys know how to put together a good song. If what I've said interests you in any way then I'd recommend checking this out.

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